

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2826
THE LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT BIRMINGHAM, ALA., ON
SEPTEMBER 4, 1944

SUMMARY

Railroad: Louisville & Nashville
Date: September 4, 1944
Location: Birmingham, Ala.
Kind of accident: Side collision
Trains involved: Freight : Yard engine
Train number: Second 19 :
Engine numbers: 1803 : 2086
Consist: 48 cars, caboose : 4 cars
Estimated speed: 10 m. p. h. : 8 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders;
yard limits
Track: Double; tangent; 0.40 percent
descending grade southward
Weather: Clear
Time: 10:35 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed
Cause: Crossover switch not being lined
for intended movement of yard engine

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2826

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

THE LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY

October 14, 1944.

Accident at Birmingham, Ala., on September 4, 1944, caused
by a crossover switch not being lined for the intended
movement of a yard engine.

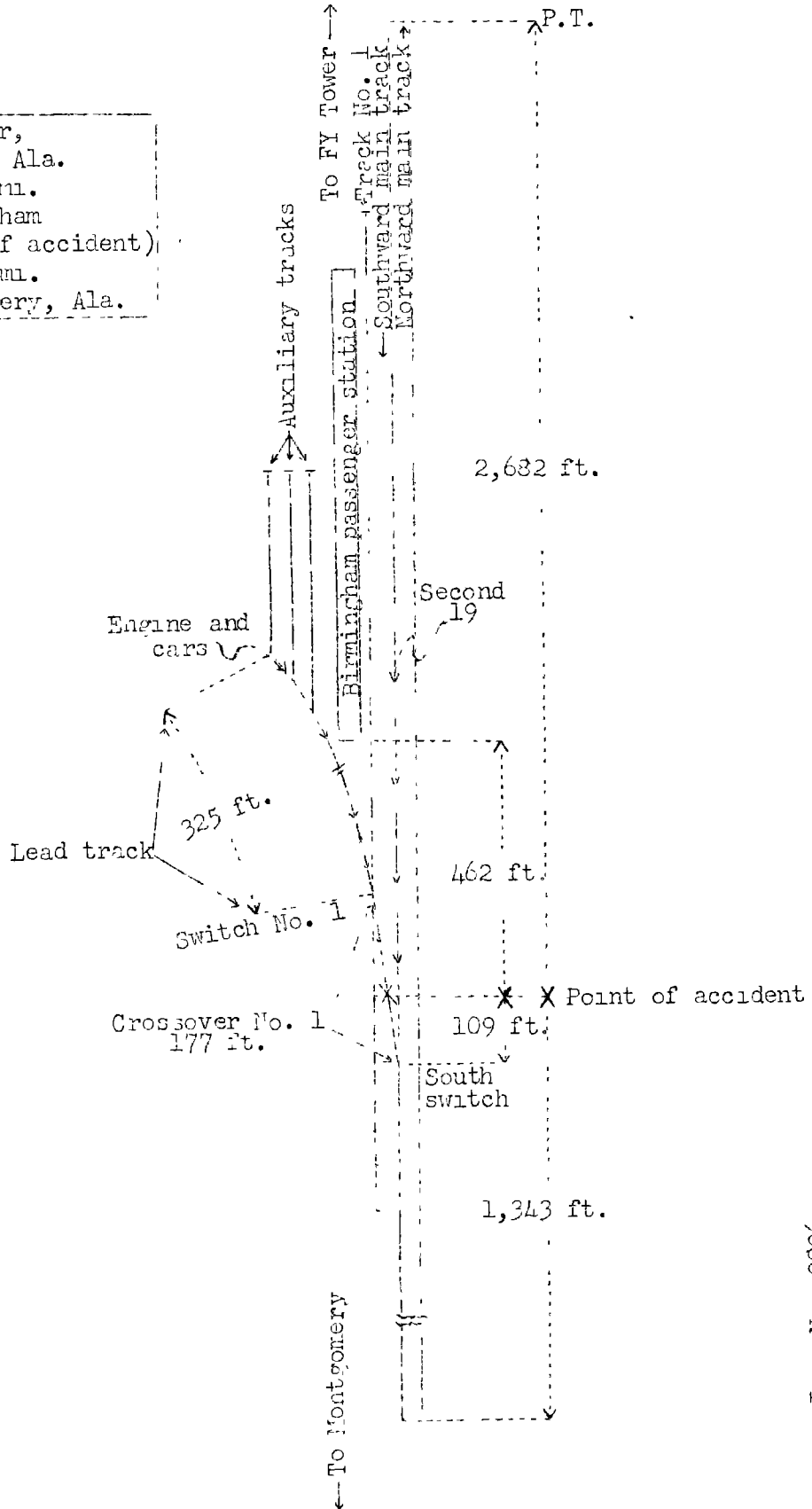
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Chairman:

On September 4, 1944, there was a side collision between a freight train and a yard engine on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad at Birmingham, Ala., which resulted in the death of one employee.

¹Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Chairman Patterson for consideration and disposition.

o FY Tower,
Boyles, Ala.
3.50 m.
X Birmingham
(Point of accident)
96.68 m.
o Montgomery, Ala.



Inv. No. 2826
Louisville & Nashville Railroad
Birmingham, Ala.
September 4, 1914

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Birmingham Division extending southward from FY Tower, Boyles, to Montgomery, Ala., 100.18 miles. In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident this was a double-track line, within yard limits, over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. In the vicinity of the passenger station at Birmingham, 3.5 miles south of FY Tower, an auxiliary track, designated as track No. 1, paralleled the main tracks on the west. The south switch of a crossover 177 feet long, hereinafter referred to as crossover No. 1, which connected the southward main track and track No. 1, was 571 feet south of the south end of the passenger station. Crossover No. 1 was facing-point for movements from track No. 1 to the southward main track. A lead track 325 feet long connected track No. 1 and several auxiliary tracks, which paralleled track No. 1 on the west. Movements from the lead track to track No. 1 or to the southward main track through crossover No. 1 were made through a single-slip switch, hereinafter referred to as switch No. 1. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the southward main track and crossover No. 1. The main tracks were tangent throughout a distance of 2,682 feet north of crossover No. 1 and 1,343 feet southward. The grade for south-bound trains was 0.40 percent descending.

The switch-stand for switch No. 1 was on the west side of the southward main track, and was of the hand-throw low-stand type. The switch-stand was provided with an oil lamp, and the center of each lens was 2.1 feet above the ties. When the switch was lined for movement from the lead track to track No. 1 a yellow light was displayed. When the switch was lined for movement from the lead track through crossover No. 1 to the southward main track a green light was displayed. No switch lock was provided.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

93. Within yard limits the main track may be used, clearing the time of first-class trains.

Second-class and inferior trains and engines must move within yard limits prepared to stop, unless the main track is seen or known to be clear. * * *

104 (a). * * *

Enginemen must know that switches are in proper position before they foul, or pull in or out of sidings or other tracks.

* * *

Description of Accident

Second 19, a south-bound second-class freight train, consisting of engine 1803, 48 cars and a caboose, departed from FY Tower about 10:10 p. m., 4 hours 10 minutes late, and while it was moving at a speed of about 10 miles per hour the thirty-sixth car was struck by yard engine 2086 at the fouling point of crossover No. 1.

Yard engine 2086 was engaged in switching operations at the passenger station at Birmingham. While this engine, headed southward, was pulling a cut of 4 passenger-equipment cars it entered crossover No. 1 at an estimated speed of 8 miles per hour and struck Second 19.

The thirty-sixth to thirty-ninth cars, inclusive, of Second 19 were derailed and damaged. The front truck of the tender of engine 2086 was derailed, and the engine was considerably damaged.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10:35 p. m.

The engineer of engine 2086 was killed.

Discussion

The rules of this carrier governing operation within yard limits provide that second-class and inferior-class trains and engines must be operated in such manner that they can be stopped short of a train, an obstruction or a switch not properly lined. In addition, enginemen must know that switches are lined properly for the movement of their train.

Engine 2086 was pulling a cut of 4 cars southward on the lead track. The foreman and the switchmen, who were north of the engine, thought switch No. 1 was lined for the movement to enter track No. 1, which was the intended route. However, just prior to the accident, the foreman observed that switch No. 1 was lined for entry to crossover No. 1, and that Second 19 was moving on the southward main track. He was giving stop signals with a lighted white lantern when the collision occurred. The fireman was engaged in tending the fire and did not observe the position of switch No. 1. When his engine entered the crossover he observed that Second 19 was moving on the southward main track. Then he called a warning to the engineer, who immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred almost instantly. The engineer was killed. About 10 minutes prior to the accident engine 2086 had moved from the southward main track through crossover No. 1 to the lead track.

The switchman who operated switch No. 1 for this movement said that after the movement was completed he lined the switch for movement to track No. 1. This employee and the foreman said that a few minutes before their engine moved to the lead track they observed that the switch lamp on switch No. 1 displayed a yellow aspect, which indicated that this switch was lined for movement on track No. 1. An extra gang foreman, who was in charge of a track motor-car which was operated on track No. 1 over switch No. 1 a few minutes prior to the accident, said that the switch lamp displayed a green aspect at that time, and no member of his crew changed the position of the switch. No unauthorized person was observed in the vicinity of the switch prior to the accident. After the accident, examination of switch No. 1 disclosed that it was in position for entry to crossover No. 1. No defective condition of the switch was found.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a crossover switch not being lined for the intended movement of a yard engine.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fourteenth day of October, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.